

Sixth Grade Summary Sept 2:

Faculty Present: Joe Mauro, Barbara Share, Maria Eugenia Abrante, Alina Mendoza, Susie Loutoo, Leslie Morris

Began the meeting by defining the agreed-upon sixth grade issues:

- Relationships – logical associations between two or more things (i.e., people, things, societies)
- Independent problem-solving – analytical abilities and methods to arrive to a correct solution; sometimes there are multiple correct solutions to a problem.

Decided to document relationships and problem-solving in the curriculum in the Content section of the curriculum maps when relevant.

The team discussed topics in each subject area in which relationships can be explored:

- Math: Variables & numbers, shapes, angles, input and output table of values, lines & parabolas
- Library: Databases, databases and research, academic reading & reading for pleasure
- Flex: Different cultures, languages, people and society
- Social Studies: Groups of people, Spain and Latin America, oppressed vs. oppressor, ideas spreading throughout cultures
- English
 - Friendship (*A View From Saturday* and *The Alchemist*) Students discuss what makes a good friend & try to think of ways characters meet or do not meet these qualifications.
 - Personal Growth (*The Alchemist*, *The Slave Dancer*, and *I, Juan, de Parej*) These books deal with protagonists in difficult situations that are forced to reflect and grow.
- Science: Humans and nature (human anatomy and animal anatomy, humans and plants, human impact on Earth, within nature (rocks, weather patterns, animals, sun-moon-earth)

The team discussed topics in each subject area in which problem-solving can be applied:

- Math – reading, analyzing, rereading, equations, checking work
- Library – research, using resources effectively, using databases
- Flex – learning from other cultures and other individuals, applying lessons to current situations
- Social Studies – how historical issues were dealt with and could have been dealt with better, applying this to current situations
- English - Independent Problem solving most certainly applies to *The Alchemist*. This text focuses on a young boy who needs to adapt to his circumstances, think about the challenges in front of him, and adapt to the situation to solve a problem. We also deal with these types of skills with *Three Cups of Tea* when we consider ways we, as 6th graders, can change the world.
- Science – scientific method (identify problem, do research, form a hypothesis, test the hypothesis, analyze test results, draw conclusions), using multiple methods for solving problems, retesting hypotheses, inquiry-based learning, having students create their own plans for solving problems

Additional faculty input about curriculum mapping:

- Have noticed some increase in collaboration **That is great to hear!**

- May be helpful to send notes about meetings to all faculty so they may see what all grades are discussing
Am about to do that—this is precisely the point of these meetings. I have had a ton of things on my plate, and am trying to compile the reports and key issues in a way that is both meaningful but not overwhelming to read.
- Would like to create and work and maps at time of teaching to make maps more “real” and meaningful
Right, that’s what we are doing now. We just had to do something last spring to get the ball rolling. From here on out, we are mapping as we teach.
- Are concerned about “relationships” with respect to how students are growing and conducting themselves in social interactions
 - Are unsure of how to add this into a curriculum map for a subject area Well, this might be tough. One suggestion from another grade level was to add other “classes” to the maps so that we could map advisories too. In advisories, things like relationships, leadership, etcetera are at the fore, but that doesn’t appear in the maps. I suggested to Ernie and Isis earlier this year that we consider advisory maps. They seemed to like the idea, but wanted to ponder it more and never got back to me. I will try to follow up with them. On the other hand, one of the things we want to do with the maps is study whether the things we are concerned about are in fact in the curriculum. If they are, are we doing them well? If they aren’t, then should we figure out some ways to work them in? But, most important, it seems that your group did, in fact, talk about how “relationships” might appear and/or be applicable in the curricula of a variety of disciplines.
- Though we decided to document “relationships” and “independent problem solving” in content section of maps, is there any way to have a checklist and explanation box specifically for these issues? Hum, many groups have asked for different checklists. I’m not so sure about this, and Marla is opposed; she doesn’t even like the checklists we already have. We can certainly talk about it more though. One of the beauties of ATLAS is that we can, in fact, customize it however we want to.
- Feel it may be beneficial for all grade levels to incorporate the same theme or issue so that we may explore the evolution/progression throughout students’ time here at RE
 - This may help with continuity, create a common thread, allow us to better focus and make the issues more meaningful Sure, I think this is maybe a goal for next year. I will make everybody aware of the concerns/issues at each grade level though, so that, hopefully, people will be conscious of mapping these things if they teach them, whether they are at a certain grade level or not. Perhaps next year, we’ll have these discussions together as a faculty, and pick of group of themes that we want to focus on together. For now though, I thought a more local (i.e. grade level) focus would be getting people thinking about issues that concern them.

Seventh Grade Summary Sept 2:

The overall consensus was that lessons on student respect, individual responsibility, and ethical behavior are part of the classroom culture, but not necessarily part of the curriculum, therefore, they are not usually mapped. In the English Department, for example, they cover racism and it is found in their maps. On the other hand, Math requires certain organizational skills that are not noted on the maps. It is expected that the student keep a notebook, take notes and complete homework assignments on a daily basis. In Science there are laboratory rules that are explained and practiced yet not addressed in their maps. So, I guess a question is, should these things be mapped?

In our last meeting we addressed concerns about students not the curriculum. Therefore, asking us to include buzz words into our maps to satisfy the concerns and implement them into the curriculum was not clear. We are not really trying to develop “buzz words.” We are asking faculty to identify issues that are of concern to faculty at each grade level. What we want to do with the maps is study these issues, not necessarily “satisfy” them. We are not, at this point, asking anybody to add to their curriculum; we are just asking for reporting in the maps of what is already done. If it isn’t done currently, it should not go in the maps.

There was an understanding of the use of ATLAS. Yet, the group strongly felt that standardizing the language is not the goal of mapping. Are we looking to standardize language about character development across the curriculum or is it understood that some subjects focus more heavily on that area? If yes, are we all using similar vocabulary and language, if not, do we need to? Right, we are not looking tell anybody what to teach. Certainly some topics are included in some curricula and not in others. But, if teachers express concern about issues like responsibility, we want to use the maps to help us examine whether or not we are teaching students how to be responsible. We can only do this if we identify common issues of concern and common language for talking about these issues.

There is a set of core values that we expect from each grade level. These values are discussed at dean meetings, in advisories, and issues & ethics which we can incorporate in our classrooms, but are not necessarily part of each subject’s curriculum. We recommend a parallel map that addresses school wide core issues of values and morals.

Good thought; we are considering developing additional maps that might include advisory. Issues and Ethics already is included in ATLAS.

8th Grade Summary for Sept 2:

The 8th grade meeting defined empathy as recognizing the feelings of others. In other words, “walking in another’s shoes.” We discussed that empathy appears in all disciplines in assignments and lessons. But many subjects such as math, science, computers, and lower levels foreign language would have a difficult, if not impossible, task of incorporating the idea in a lesson. **If it appears, Why?** Others such as art, English, higher level foreign language (because the cover literature), and social sciences have already identified ways to incorporate it or recognize it can be incorporated.

From this discussion came the conversation of how empathy is shown, expressed, and modeled by all the subject teachers on a daily/weekly basis because of our interactions with our individual students, classroom management, or reaction in a spontaneous “teaching moment”. **OK, that is good, and clearly something that cannot be “mapped!” 😊**

The discussion then moved to how ways we track empathy if all subjects cannot incorporate it in a lesson or unit plan map. A suggestion was born to have a map for character development or grade level student essential themes. In other words, have a map for Empathy. In that map, teachers could read the criteria or definition and check off or indicate which grade level, subject, teacher name, and unit they taught that met the criteria for empathy. Then when another teacher wanted to see who was addressing empathy for interdisciplinary reasons or informational resources, the teacher could look at the Empathy map, see what grades are touching it and how, then **look at the teacher’s individual lesson map to see details**. **It is not clear to me why, if empathy would be “checked off,” why it couldn’t simply be included in a unit map? In the “details” of this unit, couldn’t empathy be articulated and/or described?**

1. Skills

Our group came up with a list of skills but in the end felt confused over what would be labeled an essential skill and what would be labeled a character building skill. **Fair enough, but the “essential skills” have already been determined by Department Chairs and they appear in the widget in the map. Skills that don’t appear to be checked off in the widget should be reported in the “skills” section of the unit map.** The following is a list of skills that were brainstormed in which 8th grade teachers felt were critical for a student entering high school: **Research; Note taking; Time management and planning; Logical, Abstract, and Independent thinking; Initiating action; thinking proactively.** We wondered if these skills, or some of them, could be added to the essential skills checkbox that exists in our maps. Would it be a good idea to have another check box that addressed character building skills? **I think some are essentially there already, though maybe in different language. We really don’t want to add more essential skills. Having teachers articulate what they are doing, rather than check off a box, is part of the value of curriculum mapping.**

In addition, individual departments have curriculum skills but we felt those were addressed by individual department goals and would be indicated on the map accordingly.

2. Interdisciplinary potential

Honestly, we chose not to go there because we felt maps are not ready. The group felt that the academic curriculum needed to be accurate for a school year. Then identifying key terms could happen so teachers could review maps for interdisciplinary opportunities. It was a general consensus the faculties’ focus needs to be on completing the maps to reflect what is taught first. **Absolutely, I think the maps will be much more helpful in this respect when they are fully developed. I look forward to discussions in the Spring when the maps should be nearly complete.**

Freshmen Summary for Sept 2:

9th grade teachers should report in the “Skill” column when study skills are reinforced. So when math teachers reinforce good ways of taking notes or keeping a notebook or when science teachers discuss techniques for making good review sheets, it will be entered in a uniform manner and then the specific information will also be provided. This will allow all to search the database of 9th grade to see when certain study skills are presented. It will be entered the following way:

VERB (such as reviewed, discussed, reinforced) STUDY SKILLS:

What will follow will be the specific study skill (notecards or textbook reading, for example). Even teachers other than 9th graders may wish to use this format to enter information pertaining to study skills.

It was also discussed by some members to remind students of not just how to make things like review sheets or notecards, but how to effectively use these tools.

This is straightforward, but it might just work!

Sophomore Summary for Sept 2:

- Too much stratification/tracking exists to try any sort of “one size fits all” vocabulary. Absolutely, but certainly we have some basic things in common, no?
- Also too much variety of “student type” to determine which parts of the syllabus should be designated as “easy,” “medium,” or “hard.” A lot of hesitation to “pigeonhole” student behavior and/or goals. Right. After thinking about this more and discussing it with Marla from ATLAS, I am not sure this is an idea we want to implement. We also are quite unsure about how we would do this, technically, were we decided to go ahead with this concept.
- A general sense that that would be just too much to ask of teachers to try to monitor & express those sorts of things on Atlas.
- Also present was the sense that much of what we were being asked to do for Atlas was linked to things that “made the software work,” such as having certain “buzzwords” in strategic places so as to simply make the resulting readout be cohesive. This is not at all about “buzz words.” We have asked faculty to identify issues of concern to them at each grade level. If they are issues of concern, hopefully there is some interest in making them better. The maps might be able to help us do that. So, we simply want to “allow the software to help us” reflect on what we do...not to “make the software work” for the sake of using the software. That would be a waste of time.
- The idea of settling on two or three words or phrases that we can use to address “themes” of topics important for tenth graders was finally agreed on, after patient clarification by Laura! Ah, that’s why I asked her to facilitate this group! ☺
- We dropped “note taking” because of a wide array of approaches to that topic. Fair enough, though it is notable that “note taking” seems to be a major concern as a study skill for the teachers of Freshmen; so we may want to be aware of that at other grade levels and report it in the maps where applicable. English teachers use text marking, math teachers might not require note taking as such, different learning styles dictate how individual students handle it, etc. We also dropped “time management” as each of us addresses that anyway. Also a fair point, though a concern for other grade levels (both Freshman and Juniors) as well.
- One value we all agreed on was the ability for students to apply what was learned in one class in another class. The result of this sort of critical thinking gave students a sense of relevance to their studies which we all agreed is energizing. Our term for this eventually became “making connections.” Many felt that a goal for a student in the tenth grade was that they begin to put together concepts across disciplines (i.e. the logarithms used in math are tools for me to solve chemical equations in chemistry), within each discipline (i.e. the basics they learned in their 9th grade language class enables students to express themselves more abstractly in the 10th grade), as well as between what they are learning in their classes and the world they live in (the injustice experienced by the native American character in one of their texts is parallel to the injustice other groups feel today). Great—this is a great concept/skill to try to identify in the maps if we can. Down the road, as we are trying to find ways of articulating this, we might just also find places in the curriculum that suit themselves to interdisciplinary work that we had not identified before.
- We also ended up with “collaboration.” We agreed on collaboration because of the need for students to work together in and out of class to better understand the concepts they are learning. Ana mentioned encouraging students to outline and/or study as groups and most agreed that their ability to collaborate with their peers was necessary to do well, whether it was on projects, studying, or in class. Also, a great concept and aspect that we work on in our curriculum at RE. Perfect to include in curriculum maps where applicable.

Junior Summary for Sept 2: What a beautiful report, Ms. Miller!

Summary

Keyword and concepts to incorporate into the Junior curriculum maps:

- **Work independently**
- **Plan independently**
- **Cultivate academic honesty**
- **Work/learn Collaboratively**

We decided that as Juniors they needed to begin the preparation process for living on their own in college and managing their own life, time and work. Further, it was determined that this involved more than just time management, so we change our focus to the key issues above. In addition these are issues that are easily worked into the existing curriculum in all of the departments. The largest concern was adding more work to the students and curriculum, when time already seems to be an issue. Adding time management skills to classroom teaching would cause other topics to be dropped and would add to the time management problem the Juniors appear to already have. Thus, the above listed concepts were proposed since they easily meld with current curriculum being taught and do not require separate formal teaching. They can be incorporated into any topic and lesson through activities and existing classroom discussions. They thought time management and ethical behavior could be discussed more formally in advisory.

What was discussed:

Reminders

1. Revisit Grade level issues and incorporating them into our Curriculum maps
2. What you put on the Atlas map should be what you teach not what you intend to teach.
3. The language that we come up to day will be used in Atlas for all teachers who teach 11th graders.
4. Time management was one of the big issues discussed previously.
5. Tom and Paul recapped for us since they were in the previous 11th grade meetings.

Main Topics of Discussion

1. Schedule of Junior Student
2. Time Management – Is the issue really that or do we as a school ask too much of them? How should we formally address it?
3. Ethical Behavior issues that arise due to the “crunch” feeling students have with all of their obligations.
4. Is it appropriate to place these issues in the Curriculum or should it be relegated solely to advisory.

Junior Student Schedules

- Most work is in the spring semester: Summer sports; English research paper (January-March) around 60-80 hours of work; AP exams; Have SAT or ACT tests on 4 out of the 7 weekends during spring semester; Preparing for college applications and portfolios
- SAT prep classes
- Plus social and club obligations

Time Management

- How do we formally address time management?
- Use Combined calendar to help us and the students be aware of all the activities going on for the Juniors (as well as the unit calendar in Atlas)
- If we are to address time management with Juniors it should be done at the beginning of the year during orientation. Students and teachers do not need one more thing to formally teach in class. It will add to the time management issue not solve it.
- Advisors could do an activity of how students spend their time and how they can streamline that
- Several parents talked about the stress of the parents and the affect on the students and the late nights their juniors had doing work. – the kids didn't complain about the work – it was just a lot.
- One suggested don't talk about all the work or managing it (because that what gets the frenzy going), just let it be an understood concept that your Junior year you are going to work hard and you must accept it.
- Sports take a large portion of their day.
- Students need to make CHOICES about what to focus on – not necessarily worry about being involved in EVERYTHING. For instance, 2 clubs and a sport plus AP's might be too much, they need to choose what they want to focus on and do really well.

Is Time Management Really the Problem?

- ❖ Do we expect too much of them at certain times (see Junior Spring schedule) – most thought yes
- ❖ Does the school culture need to change? (probably – but not very likely)
- ❖ It may not be possible for them to manage all they have to do well
- ❖ Time management isn't the issue if they are given an unrealistic amount of work
 - Suggested moving the research paper to second semester senior year
 - Most applications processes are complete by then so workload is light
 - Would keep students engaged second semester senior year since they can't graduate without completing one.
 - Tom wasn't sure how the senior elective teachers would like that and stated there were several logistical issues that would be created such as AP English doesn't have the time for a research paper---JAK agrees!
 - Suggested instead of having a large research paper complete several small research papers (3-5 pgs); would not be as time intensive or require as much independent work as a large research paper.
- ❖ Let Atlas sort this out by **showing** how much work students in the 11th grade are asked to complete – that is what Atlas is for ☺ **Yep! Double** ☺

So..... Time management morphed into independent work and learning – Everyone agreed that that really was the skill that Juniors needed to work on and can easily be incorporated into the existing curriculum.

Juniors have many activities that required self management in English, College preparation, AP classes and even the typical math class moves students towards more independent learning.

- ❖ The two key skills that should be listed in the Curriculum map would be:
 - **Work independently**
 - **Plan independently**
- ❖ It was also suggested that we make a notation of some sort next to major assessments when they occur so when you look at the curriculum map you can easily see where the major projects and assignments are located during the year – however that does not address the college counseling aspect of their year.

Ethical Behavior

- What is ethical behavior? Why do kids Cheat? Jen is using that as an essential question for the honor council.
- Through collaborative learning – which is a model often used in colleges – ethical issues surfaces and are can be addressed in “teachable moments”
- Cultivate intellectual honesty
- Goes hand in hand with working independently
- Ethical issues can be reduced by reducing workload and stress of Junior year since that is when “shotcuts” or ethical issues come into play.

Issues and Concerns

- If we keep adding topics or essential questions to the curriculum then other topics and essential questions must go by the wayside –which may not be good
- Some are still concerned with how Atlas really will be used to help us – other than to say check we have this logged what we teach.
- Are we really asking the Juniors to do to much?
- Are we creating this Junior frenzy by talking about it?
- TIME

Senior Summary for Sept 2:

Report coming shortly!